

MINUTES OF MARION CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING 6:30 P.M.
DECEMBER 13, 2011

A regular meeting was held by City Council on December 13, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. over which Mayor Rodney Berry presided. Council members Ronald Atkinson, Bobby L. Davis, Ralph Atkinson, Betsy Atkinson and Odessa Gregg were present. Councilman Michael Baker notified the Mayor that he would be absent. Also present were several citizens.

Councilwoman Gregg gave the opening prayer. Mr. Ammons led the Pledge of Allegiance and Mayor Berry welcomed all guests and press. (Hometown TV and the Star/Enterprise)

Mayor Pro-Tem Ronald Atkinson made a motion to accept the minutes from the regular meeting on November 8, 2011, seconded by Councilwoman Atkinson; motion carried.

On behalf of the Mayor and City Council, a Resolution of Appreciation for Mr. Kevin Rowell, Jr. was read by City Clerk Pam Jones. Kevin was recognized for his accomplishment in winning the State of South Carolina's *Grandparent Essay* about his great-grandmother Mrs. Mattie Barr.

Miss Stacie Davis made a request to the City for a sponsorship/donation for the Miss Marion County USA/Miss TEEN Marion County pageants to be held in March 2012. She explained the request for sponsorships or donations to help fund the pageants needs as there would be many guest judges and visitors coming from all over the country and she is striving to have Marion County make an outstanding impression. Miss Davis gave a handout to the Mayor and Council members detailing the expenses (advertising, security, lighting and others) involved in presenting the pageants. Mayor Berry asked that this request be taken under advisement with Council. He went on to say that the City was going to make the venue (C.D. Joyner) available free for the pageant's use and that the City had numerous ways to help promote the event including the City newspaper (Swamp Fox Scene), the City's page on Facebook, and signage. Councilman Davis commented that Council should come together at some point and make a decision as to what we should do. Mayor Berry stated that a decision would be rendered at the January Council meeting. He asked Stacy to give her contact information to HometownTV, which is the Kingdom Beauty Pageant office at 843-423-0679.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Regarding our Christmas Holiday Work Schedule, Mr. Ammons stated that we would be following the State's guidelines which is Friday, Monday and Tuesday off. Due to the enormous amount of boxes and holiday trash, we may run a skeletal crew of 3 or 4 that Tuesday and everyone else will report back to work on Wednesday. Councilman Davis inquired as to whether the Personnel Policy had been checked regarding this. Mr. Ammons commented that the Personnel Policy stated we are given Christmas Day and the day after Christmas, and the Mayor is empowered to give Christmas Eve. Councilman Davis commented that if this was not in line with the Personnel Policy, that a motion needed to be made. After some discussion, Mayor Pro-Tem Atkinson made a motion to give City employees Friday, Monday and Tuesday (December 23, 26, & 27) for the Christmas holidays, seconded by Councilman Davis; motion carried.

Mr. Ammons stated that the playground equipment at Withlacoochee had been completed, Grice's will be done by the end of the week and Tilghman would only take a couple of days. Mr. Ammons encouraged Council to go by and see how good they look. Mayor Berry asked if we had identified what pieces of playground equipment could still be used and what was Council's thought on sending it to Sellers. Mr. Ammons responded that there were 2 monkey bars and the slide from Watsonia. Councilman Davis asked if Mr. Ammons had checked to see if those pieces of equipment could be used elsewhere in Marion. Mr. Ammons commented that the parks would no longer have need of them. Councilman Ralph Atkinson commented that he didn't mind as long as we didn't have any use for them down the line. Councilman Davis commented that he had no problem giving it to them, but we need to look at our areas first to see if we have any place they can be used for our kids. Councilman Davis inquired about placing something on East Mullins Street near the basketball court to which Mr. Ammons responded that a set of monkey bars could be placed there. Mr. Ammons stated that there was a safety issue with the sliding board and it could not be used unless it was repaired. Mayor Berry asked if we could send the 2nd set of monkey bars to Sellers as he felt they needed all the help they could get and although they are not in the City limits, they still have kids there. Councilman Davis commented that he loves Sellers, but that our City kids come first and we should look around here and make sure that we can't use that equipment here before we give it away. Mr. Ammons stated that a set of monkey bars would be placed at the East Mullins Street park and we will keep the other pieces for now.

Regarding the Grand Strand (GSWSA) Water and Sewer Project, it will be starting at the first of the year and will run on North Main Street from Victor Street to Bobby Gerald Parkway and 1,000 feet down Jones Avenue and will be a sewer rehabilitation project which will take about a month to complete. We met with DOT and the consensus was that due to the traffic on Main Street,

work would be done at night with no more noise than general traffic. This is a much more high-tech project than we were able to do in the past and at this time we do not have GSWSA's total expenditure for this project. Smoke testing is currently being done at various locations in the City. GSWSA will be replacing a mile of sewer line every year in the City.

There are 6 or 7 vacancies on the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) and Mrs. Mary Eaddy has been working with Pam to get together a list of names to correspond with the 14 areas outlined on the City map. The CAC will have a list of names that will be brought to Council for approval at the next meeting. Councilman Davis asked if Mr. Ammons had reviewed the proposed list to which Mr. Ammons responded that Mrs. Eaddy has the draft list of people she has talked to and would be willing to serve. Mrs. Eaddy asked that if Council knew of anyone who would like to serve, please give the information to Ms. Jones. Councilman Davis commented that we need to have a person from each district serve on this committee and attend these meetings and in case someone has missed something in another district they could bring it up right then and have it addressed, similar to what we have for the Crime Watch. Mr. Ammons and Councilman Davis commented on the great work that Mrs. Eaddy does for the City and what a valuable tool this committee is for the City. Mr. Ammons will get Council a copy of the map, which has 14 different areas and probably has at least 2 representatives in each District. Mr. Ammons stated that we also need Fox Watch members if anyone has any suggestions. Councilman Davis commented that we originally had at least 2 people from each District and the Mayor also appointed someone. Councilman Ralph Atkinson asked if they could get a list of the members and see if they are attending and if they are not, we may need to replace them. Mr. Ammons stated that in the future, Council may want to have some type of attendance requirement.

Street Superintendent Ronnie Sanders was named November Employee of the Month and presented with a gift certificate.

CITY ATTORNEY'S LEGAL UPDATE

City Attorney Robert Lee stated that the Sweitzer matter would be tried tomorrow in Mullins at 10:00 a.m. and that he and Mr. Ammons would be in attendance and the matter will be resolved at that time. He has notified Ms. Sweitzer so that she would be able to testify in this matter. Issues regarding the landfill will be taken up in Executive Session.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

All departmental reports are sent in the Council's packets.

**ACCOUNTABILITY OF CITY OFFICIALS/COMMENTS FROM CITY COUNCIL AND
MAYOR**

Councilman Davis, with the agreement of Council, has been in contact with Ms. Andrea Loney, Esq., Executive Director of the South Carolina Legal Services, to give a presentation on foreclosures and legal services at the January meeting. She will discuss foreclosures which is in reference to the monies that are available to our state, which folks in Marion County, for the most part, are not using. She will also speak briefly about free legal services available to our citizens. Councilman Davis asked for them to be allowed 20 minutes to give the presentation. Regarding the new playground equipment, Councilman Davis commented on how much he liked the new equipment and on the great job they were doing installing it, but he noticed that the swing set could use a new paint job and felt that could be accomplished for \$20 - \$30. Mr. Ammons responded that we were going to paint it and Elizabeth gets credit for picking the color. Councilman Davis stated that everything looks great out there. Councilman Davis offered his congratulations to Kevin Rowell for his state award and to Mr. (Ronnie) Sanders for his well-deserved Employee of the Month award. Councilman Davis went on to thank Ronnie for all of his help with the community garden and how appreciative everyone was and ask that he continue to work with us, and the seniors and underprivileged in particular.

Mayor Pro-Tem Atkinson commented on the success of the Christmas Tree Lighting and the many positive comments he had been given, in particular the fireworks show. Mr. Ammons stated that the fireworks were bid out on what we could get for the dollar amount and he had also heard that it was a much better show. Mayor Pro-Tem Atkinson also thanked all the City employees for the good job downtown, everything looks real good.

Councilman Ralph Atkinson had no comment at this time.

Councilwoman Betsy Atkinson had no comment at this time.

Councilwoman Odessa Gregg commented that she appreciates all the hard work that goes into the Citizens Advisory Committee and recognizes how hard Mrs. Eaddy works. Councilwoman Gregg stated that she knew from time to time that the City and Mayor receive tickets that were not used and would like for them to be offered to the Chairperson of these committees first, and then pass them along to other members. Mayor Berry agreed with this suggestion.

Mayor Berry congratulated the 2 City soccer teams that went to the state championships last Saturday. Also on Saturday, the City held its first Ping Pong (Table Tennis) Tournament and had a good turnout. The tournament was won by Milton Rogers and his son won the youth tournament. Mayor Berry stated that he could not take credit for the Christmas program, that belongs to Cleve Dorsey, Morris Ward, Keith Stewart and a host of others. This year appeared

to be a record turnout. Mayor Berry told how we had record giving financially this year for the food box drive. We will be going through DSS for names of those who need the boxes, but Council is also encouraged to give to Alan the names of any residents in their district who may be in need. Mayor Berry commented on the great turnout at Mr. Davis' gathering and also at Mrs. Odessa's and he was proud to be a part of them. They were well run and the people enjoyed them immensely. Mayor Berry commented that Ralph and Ronald agreed to give their money toward the food boxes. Mayor Berry went on to say that there had been a lot of great effort by the Council and he was very appreciative. Mayor Berry invited everyone to the Opera House at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday to welcome Magnolia Gardens to Marion. They intend to employ 80 people within the next 8 months. Mayor Berry and Councilwoman Gregg met with the lady from the Benefit Bank and she is currently working with Dianne to put together a promotion package and plan some seminars.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

With no further comments, Councilman Ralph Atkinson made a motion to enter Executive Session for a Legal Update on Pending Lawsuit, seconded by Councilwoman Atkinson; motion carried.

Councilwoman Atkinson made a motion to enter Open Session, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Atkinson; motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion, Mayor Pro-Tem Atkinson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Davis; motion carried.

Mayor Rodney Berry

City Clerk Pam Jones
Taped December 13, 2011